

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Maureen Evelyn and I am a State employee, working at the Department of Developmental Services. At 17 years old, I attended a community college because it was an affordable option that allowed me to begin higher education and still live within my means in pursuit of my career.

Youth find it a great option for financial reasons, because they save money over the cost of attending universities, both in tuition rates and room and board, as it allows them to live at home. Improved policies allow their credits to follow them when they do go on to receive even higher levels of education.

In these tough economic times, you don't have to be 17 years old to have a budget that is stretched to the limits. Another factor in the recent surge in Community College populations is the non-traditional student who has lost their job and is looking for new career options. They, too, are on limited budgets and the Community College offers them an affordable and reasonable option to do so.

Community College staff, like most areas of State employment, is already doing more with less. Staff to student ratios have grown commensurate to our growth in education because of limited funding. Reducing or abolishing any part of state support for education could be highly detrimental to the students, communities and the State because in the long run, better education leads to better jobs and better jobs lead to more taxes collected.

Please do not jeopardize our Community College students' future by cutting funding that assists both current and future leaders.

It is preposterous to me that in a state with well over 3.5 million people contributing to the outrageous deficit, our government still takes the easy way out by expecting the state employees (an estimated 40,000 workers) to balance two-thirds of the budget by cutting further into their benefits and career services. We already make less than we did three years ago due to a freeze on raises and promotions and conceding to unpaid furlough days, and now you are in essence taxing education, the one thing that should still be seen as an investment in our state's future!